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ABSTRACT

The incorporation of increasing numbers of minorities and non-traditional students into the college and university environment has significance for higher education ethics. Though demographic patterns imply that campus diversity is a worthy goal, social indicators suggest that the idea faces constant threat. Black and Hispanic high school graduates still lag significantly behind Anglo students in basic skills and scores. However, data show that regardless of race or ethnicity, students are as similar as they are diverse. Systematic research on the academic and social experience of minority students found that across a wide range of institution types, minority students experience alienation as they move further and further into their academic programs. The institutional challenge is to create affirming climates through an asset rather than a deficit approach to students. An asset approach seeks institutional changes that make the environment more encouraging to minority students while resolving whatever deficits they may have through the development of a unified and holistic vision of education. Key elements appear to include a "critical mass" of minority students, respect, personalization and informality, and an atmosphere of success, cooperation, and vision. (Contains 14 references.) (JB)

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THE CHALLENGE OF DIVERSITY

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THE CHALLENGE OF DIVERSITY

Introduction:

One of the most pressing issues in higher education has been the incorporation of minorities and "non-traditional" students into the campus. Efforts to increase their numbers at student and faculty levels have been followed by sometimes controversial review of the academic programs and curriculum reform. These changes in higher education have not been without their ethical dimension. The significance of diversity for the analysis of the ethics of high education is an underlying consideration of this essay. While it soes not directly address the ethical questions, its significance for the issues presented by others is easily seen.

In many respects the campus changes are driven by the developments of the larger society. The demographic composition of the nation is changing much more rapidly than many realize. Furthermore, it is recognized that the demographic trends in the nation are further complicated by the economic and social trends within the minority population as they become a larger portion of the whole.

Recently, under the leadership of the American Council on Education a "blue ribbon" commission of distinguished citizens analyzed the

changes and their significance.[1] Their report outlined the dramatic and significant falloff in minority progress that has taken place since 1976. It states that with a growing proportion of the American population made up of minorities who are victimized by economic and social decay, further declines in minority progress will lead to declines in national progress.

Indeed, the United States Department of Labor now estimates that by the year 2000, 80% of the new entrants into the labor force will come from three categories--minorities, immigrants and women.[2] Given such a prospect, the social and economic consequences of poor education in any of these groups will profoundly impact the nation.

Therefore as institutions of higher education confront the challenge of campus diversity, they do so within a national climate where after a brief surge in national interest in minority progress following the asassination of Martin Luther King, there has been a long period of national decline in that commitment. So much so that hopes for diversity are threatened by countervailing forces which thwart and challenge institutional efforts, hopes and desires.

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[1]American Council on Education. One Third of a Nation. A Report of the Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life, Washington:1988.

[2]Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. From Minority to Majority: Education and the Future of the Southwest, Boulder: 1987.

The challenge to an ideal of campus diversity as well as the extraordinary opportunity within that diversity are seen in the demographic trends and projections. On a national scale minorities make up a growing proportion of the traditional college-age population, those 18-24 years, and will continue to increase. In 1985 minorities comprised 25% of the total population between 18 and 24. That proportion is projected to rise to 29% by 1995; 31% by 2000, and 39% by 2025.[1]

While these demographic patterns imply that campus diversity is a worthy goal, the social indicators reflect that this ideal faces a constant threat. For example, since 1968 high school graduation rates for black and Hispanic youth have increased dramatically even though they still lag significantly behind those of white youth. (Albeit, only 50.3% of Hispanics aged 18-19 years had graduated form high school in 1983 and blacks only 59.1%, versus 75.6% for Anglo youth).[2]

However other data indicate that in terms of basic skills as well as course pattern and SAT scores, black and Hispanic high school graduates still lag significantly behind Anglo students. Recently, it was reported that in 1985 some 1,052,351 high school seniors took the SAT (representing 61% of seniors planning to attend college full

[1]James R. Mingle. Focus on Minorities: Trends in Higher Education Participation and Success, Denver: Education Commission of the States, 1987.

[2]U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Handbook of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No.2175. Washington D.C., 1983.

time).[1] Of that number 70,000 were black and 17,000 Hispanic. What is crucial here is the performance level of these black and Hispanic students. Of those scoring below 400 on the verbal portion, 50,000 were black and 10,000 Hispanic. On the math portion there were 44,000 black and 7,000 Hispanic that scored below 400.

For those scoring above 750, there were 10 blacks and seven Hispanic students in the verbal portion and 27 blacks and 25 Hispanics in the math portion. Regardless of one's opinion of the SAT and other such forms of assessment, these data must be seen as challenging if not alarming.

In spite of years of protest for change, minority youth in elementary and secondary schools are still being tracked into vocational or general programs where they are challenged less and offered less. Even those who enter the college preparatory track are small in number and with a considerable educational deficit.

These demographic and academic realities shape both the challenge of campus diversity as well as the structure for creative opportunity. Indeed, given the national need, universities and colleges are one of the last hopes for reversing some unfortunate trends in minority education. Regardless of level it must be recognized that "we are all part of one system."

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[1] Russell Edgerton. "New Professionalism in Teaching," Presidential Address at the American Association of Higher Education, March 1988.

II. WHO ARE WE SERVING?

To begin to understand the scope of this challenge, we must have an even greater understanding of our students--their histories, values and aspirations for the future. In order to begin this process, we began to analyze certain variables that were surveyed in the ACE/UCLA 1987 Freshman Survey, which may affect the way we relate and respond to students.[1] Specifically, there were four specific areas with significant differences: family status, family income, academic preparation and skills, and levels of confidence and determination.

With regard to family status, 49 percent of the black students who completed the 1987 Freshman Survey reported they came from two parent homes. This is significantly different from every other racial or ethnic group in the survey. In the other groups, the percentages who lived with both parents range from 61 percent for Puerto Ricans to 85 percent for Asians. This presents a particular challenge setting Black students apart from all other students when they enter the academy .

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[1]We would like to express our appreciation to Alexander Astin and Casey Green of the University of California at Los Angeles for providing us with these data.

TABLE I

STATUS OF PARENTS
4 YEAR INSTITUTIONS, 1987

	WHITE	BLACK	AM. IND.	ASIAN	CHICANO	PUERTO RICAN
LIVING WITH EACH OTHER	78.3	49.2	64.3	85.9	74.8	61.8
DIVORCED/SEPARATED	17.7	40.8	28.2	8.7	20.1	32.6
ONE/BOTH DECEASED	4.0	10.1	7.5	5.4	5.1	5.6

With regard to family income, a much higher proportion of Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans come from families where the estimated income was below $30,000 per year while Anglos and Asians are much more likely to come from families with incomes above, $50,000. These are not new findings for it has been long understood that minorities tended to come from families with lower incomes, but the difference among those coming from single-parent families <u>plus</u> the economic challenge and problems that they face raise interesting issues.

TABLE II

FAMILY INCOME
4 YEAR INSTITUTIONS, 1987

	WHITE	BLACK	AM. IND.	ASIAN	CHICANO	PUERTO RICAN
LESS THAN $14,999	7.0	28.3	17.9	15.7	22.0	29.8
$15,000-29,999	17.1	27.3	23.6	19.0	27.9	24.3
$30,000-49,999	31.7	24.7	30.1	26.7	28.2	23.7
$50,000+	44.1	19.6	28.5	38.7	21.8	22.3

There are also significant differences in academic skills and preparation. Asian students--more than any others --report a great deal of time on homework and preparing for school. [1] As compared to Anglo students or others, Asian students reported spending almost 20% more time studying, doing homework and preparing .

TABLE III
SIX OR MORE HOURS SPENT ON:
4 YEAR INSTITUTIONS, 1987

	WHITE	BLACK	AM. IND.	ASIAN	CHICANO	PUERTO RICAN
Studying/Homework	46.2	48.1	46.4	66.5	49.0	50.2
Socializing	84.5	66.2	78.0	69.4	73.1	72.5
Working for Pay	63.5	56.3	59.6	46.0	55.9	53.2
Watching TV	31.1	45.0	32.6	36.1	28.5	31.1

On the other hand, in spite of their awareness of academic skills, Chicanos and Blacks report impressive levels of determination. When asked, "how do you feel about your ability to make it in the institution and your determination to make it," Chicanos and Blacks expressed higher levels of commitment, determination, and confidence even though they had lower levels of preparation.

[1] See Uri Treisman. "A Study of the Mathematics Performance of Black Students at the University of California, Berkeley," 1985.

TABLE IV
SELF RATING--ABOVE AVERAGE OR TOP 10%
4 YEAR INSTITUTIONS, 1987

	WHITE	BLACK	AM. IND.	ASIAN	CHICANO	PUERTO RICAN
Academic Ability	66.4	67.6	65.1	78.2	64.4	53.2
Drive to Achieve	64.5	68.3	65.3	73.2	71.5	66.9
Self Confidence-Intellect	54.0	58.9	60.0	58.6	58.3	55.3

There are also significant similarities among the students. When looking at the motivation for attending college there was no substantial difference between any group. Most of the Chicanos and Blacks said they went to college for two reasons: to get a better job and prepare themselves for entering the mainstream in the future. They go to college, they reported, for economic reasons--the traditional reason among most students. The same holds true for intended majors, careers and post-baccalaureate plans.

TABLE V

REASONS FOR GOING TO COLLEGE
4 YEAR INSTITUTIONS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 1987

	WHITE	BLACK	AMER. IND.	ASIAN	CHICANO	PUERTO RICAN
GAIN IN GENERAL EDUCATION	60.8	72.9	62.6	70.7	68.0	68.1
LEARN MORE ABOUT THINGS	72.6	77.3	77.6	76.4	79.5	77.5
GET A BETTER JOB	79.5	88.9	78.6	79.9	80.1	78.1
GO TO TOP GRADUATE SCHOOL	44.5	66.5	51.5	70.4	61.2	65.1
EARN MORE MONEY	67.0	82.4	68.6	66.5	68.4	64.6

When asked why they selected a particular college, the unequivocal response was academic quality. The number two reason was that the graduates get good jobs.

This suggests that when looking at student backgrounds we see some significant differences, particularly among Blacks in family status, and minorities in general in income and levels of preparation. We also see differences in levels of determination. When it comes to why they go to college, why they go to the particular college, and what they want to do afterwards, all students seem to fit a traditional and familiar mode.

The only difference was the third most important reason for selecting the particular college--Blacks and Chicanos, after talking about academic quality and graduates getting a good job--then the third most important reason understandably, is whether or not they get a good financial aid package.

TABLE VI

SELECTING THE PARTICULAR COLLEGE
4 YEAR INSTITUTIONS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 1987

	WHITE	BLACK	AM. IND.	ASIAN	CHICANO	PUERTO RICAN
GOOD ACADEMIC REPUTATION	59.8	63.3	59.9	63.8	66.3	64.7
GOOD SOCIAL REPUTATION	29.6	30.2	27.1	23.6	26.8	30.2
GRADUATES GET GOOD JOBS	47.3	57.0	46.7	49.5	49.1	50.1
GRADUATES GO TO TOP GRADUATE SCHOOLS	28.0	38.3	30.7	42.1	37.4	35.8
OFFERED FINANCIAL AID	20.4	38.4	31.4	25.1	39.2	40.7
OFFERED SPECIAL PROGRAMS	19.8	35.5	25.6	27.1	29.0	32.6

These data, therefore, set a specific context within the larger societal one. The social context becomes important when looking at another issue--the key values, goals and attitudes of the students--that contributes to the environmental challenge students face when they enter the academy.

When the students were asked about their values, attitudes and goals,[1] the four most important ones for all students--and therefore the similarities--were they all wanted to be well-off financially, they all--to a significant degree--wanted to become an authority in their own field, they wanted the recognition of their colleagues, as well as be successful in their own business. What was surprising, however, was when one goes beyond the professional aspect and analyzes the personal values and attitudes, a key difference becomes apparent. Among Anglos and Asians two of the most significant values and goals were to get married and to raise a family. Constantly, Anglos and Asians reported this to be high in their value structures. The same was less true for Blacks, for Chicanos, or American Indians. While they do select these goals, they are selected at a lower level than Anglos.

[1]We selected the key values and attitudes that were selected by at least 60% of the respondents.

TABLE VII

OBJECTIVES AND VALUES
4 YEAR INSTITUTIONS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 1987

	WHITE	BLACK	AM. IND.	ASIAN	CHICANO	PUERTO RICAN
BE AUTHORITY IN OWN FIELD	78.3	82.0	78.9	78.3	78.5	79.4
BE SUCCESSFUL IN OWN BUSINESS	47.8	63.5	52.2	59.4	52.5	57.0
BE VERY WELL OFF FINANCIALLY	72.5	87.5	74.4	78.5	76.7	76.5
GET MARRIED	65.0	48.4	53.5	59.3	54.1	60.9
HAVE ADMIN. RESPONSIBILITY	44.8	52.0	45.2	48.4	48.0	45.5
HELP OTHERS IN DIFFICULTY	58.9	70.3	62.8	67.9	69.2	73.0
OBTAIN RECOGNITION FROM COLLEAGUES	59.8	65.2	63.3	63.6	62.2	60.6
RAISE A FAMILY	61.4	50.4	51.8	58.2	55.3	60.2

We feel that this fact--marriage and family being ranked low by minority students--is a recognition of a harsh reality. Nationally black men are not entering higher education in equal numbers to women and this creates social distance and potential hostility among the blacks and the rest of the student population as well. Moreover, this social reality has an added dimension for minority women who come to an early understanding that continued academic and professional success may be at the sacrifice of such personal goals as marriage and family.[1]

Our data show that regardless of race/ethnicity the students are as similar as they are diverse. As we try to challenge them towards the highest levels of expectation and educational excellence in our institutions we must recognize that both the differences and

[1]Yolanda T. Moses. "Black Women in Academe: Issues and Strategies." Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, Washington:1989.

similarities can work for us as well as against us. The challenge lies, therefore, in bringing these polarities together to build a creative approach to education and not divide--or segment--the academy even further.

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"I'M A STRANGER, DON'T DRIVE ME AWAY": ALIENATION AT THREE INSTITUTIONS

"I am a stranger here Lord, I'm a Stranger everywhere;
I could go home but I am a stranger there."

At the University of California at Santa Cruz, we gained some valuable insights into the academic and social experience of minority students through systematic research as well as a lot of trial and error endeavors. We worked closely with minority and Anglo students who came from a wide range of backgrounds and levels of preparation. At Tougaloo College in Mississippi, we had students who were seriously underprepared but highly motivated and who were working in a situation of desperate financial need for the institution. Nevertheless, we found that when challenged with the same expectations of excellence, the students at Tougaloo responded as students everywhere within a context of respect and high expectations: they saw the high expectations and the demands as signs of respect and rather than as barriers. At Swarthmore College, we worked with students who were highly prepared and motivated.

While there were many differences among the minority students at these three institutions, there is one constant that was striking--the profound sense of alienation experienced or reported by the students in every setting as they moved further and further into their academic programs. As they gained greater competence in the academy, the students became aware of their growing alienation from their families, their home communities, and their predominant culture. This can be a painful realization which represents a difficult dilemma. If they attempt to return to the home community, they find themselves changed and out of synchronization with the local culture. If they continue in the academy, they will find they are moving into a world which is perhaps even more unfamiliar and that movement implies certain negative criticisms of their past life. They become a classical case of the marginal person--product of two worlds yet member of none. In the fullest sense of the expression: they cannot go home again.[1]

When we first began to detect these sentiments among the young people at Santa Cruz our first thought was to help them become more comfortable within the institution and make an adjustment to higher education.

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[1]Ronald W. Saufley, Kathryn O. Cowan, J. Herman Blake, "Struggles of Minority Students." In J. H. Cones III, J. F. Noonan, D. Janha (eds.) Teaching Minority Students. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 16. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, December 1983.

In Mississippi we found the same to be the case but we used it in a positive way to increase retention. We started out with our freshmen, pointing out that the quality and kind of education we were going to offer them would make them more and more uncomfortable at home. When they went home on breaks, they would find the friends that they went to high school with and very often parents and the people in their churches would not understand some of the dynamics going on or the things they were learning. That made it even more important for them to return to college because they were moving out of a familiar context that was becoming increasingly uncomfortable.

The lesson came home very powerfully at Swarthmore as we spent hours talking with young people, many of them Black, who were faced with the uncertain challenge of what to do with their future as they began to make their way through the institution. In some cases they found themselves in conflict with their own parents, who sometimes felt that what they were getting was good but it was taking them out of a "black context" and turning them into something that even the parents did not understand. These young people were sincere and very good people; their parents were too. But what they were challenged by was that the quality of the education and the intellectual demands placed on them made them feel even more alienated from their home environment.

As one young man said, "I know what I am getting away from but I don't know what I am getting into; and I don't know how to handle the

difference between them because I just don't know." We have found that in some cases like these, the students became disoriented; moving between at least two worlds and finding it impossible to satisfactorily relate to either. They were in a push/pull dichotomy: pushed by the academy toward expanding opportunities that are unclear and uncertain; and pulled by a home situation that is known, clear, but limited. In such a situation, it was sometimes difficult for them to adjust. Students would experience excruciating social and psychological problems which could lead to diminished levels of academic performance.

This sense of alienation is at once the most profoundly negative but also potentially positive experience for the students. The sense of alienation often led students to think they did not belong, they did not fit, and where they were going they would not be comfortable. To a great degree that is true. While the previous fabric of social support and comfort is being discarded it is not being replaced at the academy by adequate support systems. Often goals and options remained hazy and undefined. On the other hand, the individual may be liberated by realizing that the range of choice is greatly expanding--and this does have an energizing effect on many students' later development--but initially the anxiety level is increased from not knowing exactly what it is that one is choosing.

This is also the experience that happens to the creative, the innovative, the extraordinary person who is moving out of one setting into another and the new perspective that comes gives them

an acuity--even sometimes a vision--that leads to understandings that many people do not have. Alienation, disaffection from one's home or previous experience, can be an important part of a good liberal education.

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To teach is to learn twice.[1]

Institutions spend a lot of time trying to make students "feel comfortable" without an understanding of the ways in which their discomfort can become a source of intellectual excellence. Therefore a challenge of diversity to higher education is creating the right kind of educational environment to promote creativity among students. An example from our experience at Santa Cruz will illustrate this crucial idea.

An extraordinary faculty member by the name of Donald Rothman decided he was going to do something few had done with a diverse group of students. He decided to take that with which he is most familiar with and knew well, and teach it to students in a way that they could come to own it. He offered a course in tragedy--Greek tragedy, Shakespearean tragedy and modern tragedy. Readings

[1]Joseph Joubert. Pensees, 1842.

included Night, by Elie Wiesel and Death of a Salesman. He had them reading Antigone, King Lear and related works. Initially, the students began to approach the class with a sense that "this doesn't belong to me and I don't fit here." But what he helped them understand was that very often the study of tragedy is the study of a society in which some of the people become disaffected or alienated. Within that context, students began to see ways in which their experience could take on new meaning and gain new insight. Consequently, their unique understandings could begin to inform the experience of the faculty member.

The faculty member did not say to the student "We must do something to make life easier for you..." but said instead "This is what I do well, and I want to challenge you by opening you to new insights and understandings about an area that you may not know." Then when the students began to approach him--Black students, Chicano students, American Indian students, and poor white students, in a way they didn't realize they could approach him--they began to feel not "that I'm more comfortable" but that "what I'm grappling with in my personal life has echoes here; echoes that are unfamiliar but I can begin to provide some insights that others may not understand."

In an unpublished paper Rothman talks about one young man, a Chicano who entered our institution having difficulty with long division, and by the time he got into this course had been accepted to Harvard Medical School. He observed that:

> ...all of his undergraduate years had been spent preparing himself for the challenge that scientific inquiry differed enormously from literary inquiry. This young man, among others, reported how unaccustomed he had been to exchanging ideas. On one occasion he discussed how faith in God can cruelly turn into an acceptance of suffering mistakenly seen part of a great plan. But then he observed that the plays he had read provided examples of how people can choose to resist oppression and corruption, or can internalize their oppressors logic and use it against themselves or those near them. He reflected on how in reading Elie Weisel's Night--the final book in the course--the young Wiesel blames his father, who was a victim, for allowing himself to be beaten by a Nazi guard. In thinking about the various offenses committed by Oedipus, Antigone, Faustus, Desdemona, Willie Loman, and Elie Weisel's father, the student remembered that as a child he blamed his mother for allowing his father to beat her. He had never thought that this subject in his personal history could become a subject for discussion and analysis. Indeed, he never knew that others could conceivably have gone through the same ritual of blaming the victim until he began to read other people's experience within a framework of tragedy and could begin to make it similar to and see the way in which it related to his experience.[1]

In this case the institution met the challenge of diversity at the academic level, with sensitive faculty. The professor challenged the students to look at some of the literature he knew within a context in which they were affirmed rather than denied in their experience.

The challenge for us is to create similar affirming climates. That involves bringing faculty to new insights and understandings. To be

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[1]Communication from Donald Rothman, Oakes College, University of California at Santa Cruz, nd.

a scholar in one's field is not enough. They have to know how to really teach it in a way that it comes alive for a lot of other people--Anglos as well as a diverse group of students. This begins to suggest a shift away from traditional teaching modes and perspectives; "...from viewing student diversity as a problem to be solved to looking at it as a resource to be utilized."[1] Or in other words, to "access the assets" of the young people rather than "reshape" their deficits to fit the image of the academy. [2]

One of the problems with the question of deficits and assets is that the deficit notion of students very often assumes that if faculty can fix them in some way, get them remediated or get them enough financial aid, somehow or other they will fit into the institution. The assumption ignores the fact that to a great degree educational institutions do not even serve majority students let alone minority students well. We break and bruise them in ways we are not ready to face and a challenge of diversity is to look at the assets and strengths of students and create a climate in which they are affirmed and developed. We can do this by opening to the students the best of what we have to offer and reaching them on a level that they were not even aware of when they entered the classroom. When the institution takes up this responsibility, assets that are not unique but often ignored become increasingly evident.

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[1] K. Patricia Cross. "Changes in the Society: Retooling for the Students of Tomorrow." In WICHE's Reform and Renewal in Undergraduate Education, 1989.

[2] J. Herman Blake. "Approaching Minority Students as Assets," Academe, November-December 1985.

One asset is determination. Many of the minority students recognize that they come from difficult circumstances and that the range of options if they fail to succeed in the university is not only limited but often undesirable. Thus they arrive with a very strong determination to succeed no matter how high the obstacles.

Secondly students exhibit impressive resiliency, which may be strengthened by a supportive and positive environment. Students might attempt a course and not do well, but with faculty encouragement they will try again. Such perseverance and resilience are not always obvious upon arrival, but as faculty and others become aware of it, they can become partners with the students in a program where high expectations are not only the norm but a sign of respect for the student and his or her ability to succeed.

As seen in the example of Rothman's course on Tragedy, the conditions of marginality that so many consider undesirable and socially devastating, can also be turned into assets under the proper conditions. Such marginality or alienation can become a foundation for new perspectives on very traditional academic material. Not only does this become a form of intellectual enlightenment for teacher and student, but also a source of validation for one's personal history.

CREATING CLIMATES OF EXCELLENCE

College is not just a campus, it's a climate...
It's not a mechanical arrangement of fitting students into spaces,
it's fitting people and ideas into places.[1]

Certain changes are necessary if one wishes to take an asset rather than a deficit approach to diverse students. The asset approach seeks those institutional changes that make the environment more encouraging to minority students while resolving whatever deficits they may have. It requires an institution to take a much more comprehensive approach--not just in the development of specialized services which often leads to "ghettoization" and further fragmentation of the institution; but the development of a unified and wholistic vision of education.

Most important to the success of this vision, is that nebulous area that one might call socio-psychological environment, ambience, or gestalt. How do students perceive themselves in relation to the university, their studies, and other students? Do they believe they can succeed, or do they internally feel that the situation is probably hopeless? Are they basically comfortable or are the internal tensions so great that the odds of successful matriculation are minimal? The

[1]Pamela Orr. "Dr. Ernest Boyer Outlines Leadership Role for Black Colleges," Black Issues in Higher Education, May 1, 1986.

response to these and similar questions depend to a great extent on what we--for lack of a better term--will call gestalt.

1. Critical Mass

One of the most important factors in a positive gestalt for many students is the issue of critical mass. We are not prepared to say "how many of what kind" may constitute a critical mass, only that for a high proportion of diverse students potentially alienated, isolated and lonely at a predominantly white institution, some sort of critical mass is absolutely necessary for feelings of comfort, safety, and the realization that one is not so different, at least in this particular environment. There is a context, others "know who you are and understand the problems that you are facing" and "there are people to talk with you when you are feeling desperate." One can see others like oneself who are struggling and making it, who have made the necessary transitions and who offer help in acquiring the learned patterns of behavior that are imperative for academic success.

Significant numbers of "non-traditional" faculty also have profound effects on new student development both as symbols and as faculty members per se. One is not confronted by only one or two potential role models but has a range of people with whom one can potentially identify and draw support from. There is a greater variety of potential mentors and one is not locked in to prevailing assumptions about "natural" racial/cultural alliances or relationships. Finally the nature of a significantly different mix of faculty guarantees that different views and ways of approaching problems are brought to

even the most traditional subjects and situations--from these realizations, students begin to develop a very different view of what is ultimately possible.

The academy must recognize diversity and celebrate it, thereby validating different people's history and experiences. Critical masses of minority, non-traditional students and faculty help grant visibility to those who assume they are educationally invisible, and say to the students that the walls are finally down, that higher education is, in fact, possible for all.

2. Respect

Apart from the element of critical mass, students often cite"respect" as a key environmental factor in their experience. Students often emphasize that institutional respect for them as individuals and respect for other cultures and for other ways of looking at the world is imperative to help them break down the deficit models--"I don't belong," "I can't make it here," "I'm underprepared"--that they bring with them upon entering the academy.

One of the most important first steps in creating an institutional climate of respect is to consciously expunge many of the value laden assumptions and terms of reference, particularly the negative definitions referring to diverse students. Such terms as "disadvantaged," "culturally deprived," "under-privileged," "non-traditional," serve only to reinforce deficit assumptions while ignoring the interactive nature of education. Students must feel they

bring something positive to offer the academy; yet continued use of negative definitions suggests that the only significant "giver" in the process is the academy itself.

The academy must be able to take into account a wide-range of differing perspectives and values, without always assuming that majority cultural norms are definitive and demand assimilation. It cannot get locked in to only one way of looking at the world. It must maintain pluralist frames of reference, allowing diverse groups of students to feel they have some impact on the definition of social values. Higher education personnel must be open, available, and willing to "listen eloquently" to different student voices, acknowledging student concerns and indicating that it is expected that students will be heard. Extremely important is institutional willingness to listen and respond to differing student perceptions even though such perceptions may not, in fact, be entirely accurate. One must remember that for the students, their perceptions--sometimes misguided or unrealistic though they may be--are critical to the way they experience the educational environment.

Finally, genuine respect for who the students really are can be forcefully conveyed by recognition of the validity and power of the concerns that the students often bring with them regarding their families and the home community. The community and academia can not be seen to be mutually exclusive. Instead, it must be continually reinforced and reiterated how acquired academic skills

can be used for community betterment--an ongoing dialogue between the classroom and the multi-cultural community context.

3. Personalization and Informality

The student response to the academy is greatly facilitated when they perceive their immediate environment as "safe" and non-intimidating. Two critical factors in the projection of such a gestalt are the elements of personalization and informality.

Diverse students are almost always far more positive in their relation to the academy when they know they are recognized and cared about as individuals. A student's name, for example, is his or her unique source of identity, and when that identity is known and respected, it serves as a strong motivating factor in their lives.

The individual attention of faculty and staff are also critically important in personalizing the educational process and thereby making it less intimidating. Students can develop a far more profound sense of comfort when they find that their concerns are treated on an individual basis, particularly by responsive faculty.

Informality can be an important factor to the personalization of the educational experience. An atmosphere of friendship and camaraderie is vital to breaking down the intimidating professional barriers between faculty and students. Faculty cannot act as if they are hierarchically ordered above students, but must mix with them, thus greatly alleviating intimidating assumptions about the nature

and role of the professoriate. Even the most insecure students find they can get close to faculty without having to prove themselves first.

The result of such human interaction--sensitivity to individual concerns, reciprocal dialogue, inclusion of all members of the community--is the development of a unique sense of trust that contributes to the development of a true community of scholars.

4. "You Can Make It!"

A successful gestalt more than anything else confirms that the student can make it in higher education, developing an almost irresistible atmosphere of success. The academy must be convinced of the unlimited potential of the students and such a vision must be readily apparent to all--students, faculty and staff--to help insure the commitment to success. Students need examples of other students like themselves who do not merely get through, but excel. They must be given the opportunity to fail--as long as there is effort--and to return again and again to persevere and overcome. Some of our most dramatic successes were with precisely those students who initially could not complete satisfactory university work.

Our intense belief in the ultimate academic potential of these students is not feigned or merely cheerleading, but is a deeply held conviction based on our own experiences. At Oakes College and Tougaloo College, for example, most of the faculty came from similar

origins and knew firsthand the problems of inadequate preparation, poor study habits, insecurities and fear. We knew the students could do it, because we had been able to do it. We knew that by beginning with a positive view of students rather than merely acquiescing in deficit assumptions, that we would be able to reach students where they were and to help them see the possibilities for their own further development. The lesson to us became clear: colleges engaged in similar endeavors must relinquish solely negative views that see diverse students only as unfortunate educational problems. They are very capable of succeeding on the academy's terms, if they are approached in a positive manner with humane consideration for both the strengths and weaknesses that they bring with them. The students need space, time, and support and the knowledge that they can make it. Address their weaknesses; but in so doing, let them always know that you know they will succeed.

5. Cooperation

In our experience, most students also respond far better to an academic atmosphere of cooperation rather than one of competition. The type or orientation, for example, where students are told to look to their left and right and are then told that half of who they see will be gone before graduation, is absolutely devastating to some students. Young persons already insecure about their preparation and background experiences find an early competitive environment to be extremely debilitating. When cooperation is the norm, rather than the exception, students are able to reach out more effectively to not only their peers but to faculty as well.

6. Vision

As we have suggested, perhaps one of the most integral and integrating aspects of an institutional gestalt is the perceived "vision" permeating the educational experience. This can be a feeling that the academy is about something important above and beyond a strictly academic education. Students responded positively and worked harder academically when they began to identify with the individual academy's quest for a new and better academic environment. Many became drawn to a sense of common effort on their behalf and the attempt to instill a sense of the impossible dream.

The sense of vision or reaching for the impossible dream not only helped motivate students, but made it possible for many of them to begin to break away from ethnocentric ways of looking at the world. Students began to go beyond their own cultural, psychological and emotional supports and to take risks to begin to redefine themselves in other terms. The emphasis on universal principles and the potential for cooperation between and among different ethnic groups is a powerful and positive idealistic value within a college. Effective communication can develop among the various ethnicities when students feel comfortable in crossing racial and cultural boundaries. Personal confidence is enhanced as students adapt and live together despite their own assumptions and prejudices upon arrival.

From our experience, those institutions that succeed in a multi-cultural endeavor are those able to foster a larger sense of community that goes beyond the self-directed concerns of various ethnic, racial and gender groups. As one of our students stated, "I felt I was truly part of a community. I was involved, I didn't just live there...(It) taught me that 'one must always look through other people's eyes...that life is so much more complicated than just me.'"

The development of a community spirit and commitment is the result of many factors, several of which we have already alluded to: a common sense of purpose; universalist values emanating from the top downward; friendliness and informality; the willingness of everyone to try and listen and offer assistance; an emphasis on cooperation rather than competition; respect and recognition of the integrity of each individual; personal involvement in the lives of the students; the willingness of faculty and staff to mix with students on a non-hierarchical basis; as well as the development of a high quality program which takes account of the challenges we face and is founded on the unique qualities of the academy and rooted in its strengths while visionary in its approach.

But the creation of a functioning community can not be forced or artificially imposed. A college or university can only provide an environment, set the tone and let students' perspectives evolve into those incorporating strong community values. No amount of rhetoric or cajoling can move the student until they have watched us over time and finally decide that the academy's rhetoric and action,

theory and practice are, in fact, consistent and conscious. Once this transition has been made and the students truly believe that we are serious and consistent in our commitments, then we have very little more to do. The students themselves begin to act out community values, to nurture universalist attitudes in the academy and to inculcate such values within each succeeding class of students.